Repair of Railway Bridges

156. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:.

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that a railway bridge, cracked in Bihar, was running on temporary support of wooden plates;

(b) if so, the reason for not repairing the bridge on a permanent basis;

(c) how many such bridges are catering the railway tracks in the country thus endangering the lives of passengers; and

(d) the steps taken to repair them and precautions taken for passengers' safety from bridges that have outlived their lives?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir. There is no such bridge existing.

(b) to (d) Safety of bridges is accorded high priority on the Indian Railways. Repair, Rehabilitation and rebuilding of bridges is a continuous process. A well laid down system of multi-tier inspection of bridges is followed in the Indian Railways. All the bridges are inspected thoroughly once every year as per procedure laid down in the Codes and Manuals of the Indian Railways. The repair and rehabilitation of bridges is taken up on **a** programmed basis. If required, suitable speed restriction is imposed on the bridges till the repairs are carried out. However, the repair and rehabilitation of the bridges under traffic may require the super structure to be supported on temporary supports of steel cribs and wooden sleepers for execution of work. The rehabilitation/rebuilding of the bridges is carried out based on the physical condition as ascertained by the inspections and not on the basis of age alone.

Setting up of a National Steel Regulatory Commission

157. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to set up a National Steel Regulatory Commission to protect the interest of consumers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the objectives of setting up of said Commission;

(d) what would be the strength of the members in the said Commission; and

(e) what are the other steps proposed to regulate prices of iron and steel products?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) (a) to (d) In the 18th National Steel Consumers' Council (NSCC) meeting held in June, 2004, some consumers suggested formation of a National Steel Regulatory Body for keeping a check on steel prices. It was decided that the proposal would be examined by the Government.

(e) In a liberalized and deregulated environment, the Government does not intervene directly to influence prices. Prices are determined by free interplay of market forces of demand and supply.

VSP Plan to acquire stake in Australian Coal Mines

158. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Vizag Steel Plant is negotiating with some coal companies of Australia to pick up 40 per cent stake in their mines;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the expected cost of the initiative to the company;

(d) the total metallurgical coal required for Vizag Steel Plant during the last five years; year-wise; and

(e) the amount of metallurgical coal imported by Vizag Steel Plant during the last five years; year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.